

HOUSING FIRST AND DV SURVIVORS

Family Homelessness Initiative

10/12/11

HOUSING FIRST PRINCIPLES

- ◉ Homelessness is first and foremost a housing problem.
- ◉ Housing is a right to which all are entitled.
- ◉ People who are homeless or on the verge of homelessness should be returned to or stabilized in permanent housing as quickly as possible.
- ◉ Issues that may have contributed to a household's homelessness can best be addressed once they are housed.

AND, IN ADDITION

◉ When services:

- Help the program participant observe the terms of a lease agreement;
- Remove barriers to economic stability; and
- Are voluntary

THEY ARE MUCH MORE EFFECTIVE!

WHAT IS DV HOUSING FIRST?

- ◉ Survivor-Driven/Centered (Empowerment Model, Strengths Perspective) Advocacy, with safety and sensitivity to the impacts of abuser sabotage and trauma history central
- ◉ Flexible funds

EVOLVING HOUSING OPTIONS FOR DV SURVIVORS

- ◉ Sec. 8 Vouchers for DV Survivors
- ◉ Rental Assistance Programs (including State THOR and OVW Transitional Housing funds)
- ◉ VOA Home Free, Portland, OR
- ◉ District Alliance for Safe Housing (DASH), Washington DC
- ◉ Clackamas Women's Services, Oregon City, OR

IMPETUS BEHIND HOME FREE'S MODEL: ADVANCING HOUSING OPTIONS IS PART OF ENDING DV

- ◉ Finding and keeping housing one of greatest barriers faced by women who leave (or try to leave) abuse
- ◉ The DV shelter system is under immense strain because families can't access housing after a shelter stay
- ◉ Racism and inequity results in disproportionate number of survivors of color among the homeless
- ◉ Women who secure housing and stay connected to DV advocates reduce chances of re-victimization and report higher quality of life

HOME FREE'S APPROACH

- ◉ Broad eligibility with minimal program requirements
- ◉ Tailored services driven by survivors' needs
- ◉ Outreach, mobile advocacy and home visits increase accessibility of services
- ◉ Strong emphasis on working across systems to address barriers
- ◉ All service components (emergency, transitional child/youth, and outstationed) access flexible funds for wide range of participant needs
- ◉ Non-facility-based, scattered site model

Housing Instability Risk Factors

In Last Six Months...

Lived somewhere she did not want to live
Difficulty paying (or unable to pay) for housing
Trouble getting housing
Did not expect to stay in current housing
Borrowed money to pay for housing
Had 3 or more moves
Had trouble with landlord
Landlord threatened to evict
Served with eviction notice
Unlikely to be able to pay for housing this month

SHARE'S HII FINDINGS AT BASELINE

Higher Housing Instability correlated with

- Higher PTSD
- Higher danger levels
- Higher depression levels
- More absences from work/school
- Higher use of emergency medical care
- Poorer quality of life

WHAT MADE THE BIGGEST DIFFERENCE OVERALL?

BY FREQUENCY OF SELECTION AS MOST IMPORTANT

1. Having Housing
2. Support from advocate/agency
3. Myself/my own determination/faith
4. Strategies to distance perpetrator
5. Support from family and friends
6. SHARE Project

BILL & MELINDA GATES FOUNDATION INITIATIVE

- ◉ Inspired by VOA Home Free Program
- ◉ Foundation granted 4 DV agencies \$200,000 each for two years
- ◉ Half of funding for staffing and half for client assistance
- ◉ Access to permanent housing and voluntary services were only requirements
- ◉ Foundation provided WSCADV with technical assistance and support funding
- ◉ Qualitative, process evaluation included

COHORT #1

- ◉ Eastside Domestic Violence Program (east King County)
- ◉ Family Resource Center of Lincoln County
- ◉ Womenscare Shelter (Whatcom County)
- ◉ YWCA of Kitsap County

WHAT WERE THE OUTCOMES AFTER THE FIRST YEAR?

- ◉ By the end of 2010, 113 participants had entered the program
- ◉ 40.2% had permanent housing at program entry and had retained that housing at 1/11 point-in-time check in
- ◉ 52.7% obtained permanent housing and were still in permanent housing at 1/11 point-in-time check in
- ◉ 2.7% were working on permanent housing
- ◉ 4.5% had obtained permanent housing but were no longer in permanent housing

WHAT WAS THE SERVICE LEVEL?

- ◉ 55.9% Light Touch
- ◉ 27% Medium Touch
- ◉ 17.1% High Need

WHAT DOES THAT MEAN?

- ◉ Light touch—simple, discrete needs that are met quickly
- ◉ Medium touch—discrete needs met as above, plus connected with agency's services for a short period of time
- ◉ Higher needs—all of the above, plus long term planning with the advocate in order to obtain housing, improve financial situation, and address other issues

WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED?

- ◉ Strategy for homelessness prevention for DV survivors
- ◉ Housing instability may be addressed with some very easy, cost effective solutions

SURVIVOR-CENTERED ADVOCACY IS KEY

- ◉ Meeting survivor where s/he is
- ◉ Advocacy focused on safety planning with each step
- ◉ Reinforcement of autonomy and self-determination—choices honored...always
- ◉ Thinking “outside the box” for creative solutions

FLEXIBILITY IN FUNDING

- ◉ Flexible funding leads to:
 - Tailored services that support family stability
 - Help for those who may have “fallen through the cracks”
 - Efficient use of funds
 - Saying yes instead of saying no

IT'S ALL ABOUT THE RELATIONSHIPS

Advocates learned that the time investment in building relationships with private landlords and public housing agencies increased understanding of domestic violence and willingness to rent to survivors.

WHAT DON'T WE KNOW?

- ◉ Stability in housing after 6 and 12 months of housing entry
- ◉ Stability in housing after dedicated services end
- ◉ Housing options for extremely low-income
- ◉ Housing options for culturally-specific communities, undocumented immigrants, and on the reservations

WHAT'S NEXT?

- ◉ Cohort 1 agencies received additional funding for third year to explore strategies for sustainability
- ◉ New cohort of 9 agencies identified:
 - Lummi Victims of Crime
 - Kalispel Tribe
 - Spokane Tribe
 - New Hope DV/SA Services (Moses Lake)
 - Crisis Support Network (Pacific County)
 - Forks Abuse Program
 - Healthy Families of Clallam County
 - International District Housing Alliance (King County)
 - The Salvation Army (King County)

- ◉ 3 years of funding for each agency
- ◉ Deeper investment in program evaluation
- ◉ Want to know what it takes to support survivors, including those with multiple barriers, in accessing and maintaining permanent housing
- ◉ WSCADV funded for additional three years to provide TA, facilitate communication, convene cohort gatherings, and disseminate findings.

QUESTIONS?

Linda Olsen

Housing Program Coordinator

Washington State Coalition Against Domestic
Violence

linda@wscadv.org

206-389-2515, x 205